



*Congressman*

**Elijah E. Cummings**

*Serving the 7th Congressional District of Maryland*

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## Congressman Cummings to serve as top Democrat on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources Subcommittee

Congressman Cummings has been selected as the top Democrat on the subcommittee with oversight over criminal justice and drug policy in the Congress.

“A primary duty of government is to protect our people from crime, drugs and violence. No community can succeed if its people are afraid” Congressman Cummings said.

“Serving as Ranking Member on this committee gives me the legislative opportunity to sustain and increase funding that will provide federal dollars for drug treatment and to fight crime on the streets of Baltimore.”

This subcommittee, which falls under the Committee on Government Reform, handles all matters relating to the criminal justice system, the Nation’s anti-narcotics programs, health, housing, education and welfare.

In addition to the Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources Subcommittee, he will serve on the full Committee on Government Reform and the Subcommittee

on Civil Service.

He will also serve on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit and the Subcommittee on Railroads.

During the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, Congressman Cummings served as “Ranking Member” of the Subcommittee on Civil Service, which handles matters relating to the Federal Civil Service.

Among his legislative accomplishments while leading that subcommittee were: the **Long Term Care Security Act** (Public Law No: 106-265), which authorizes a group long-term care insurance program for federal workers and retirees and the **Federal Employees Health Benefits Children’s Equity Act of 1999** (Public Law No: 106-394), which enables a federal agency to enroll an employee and his/her family in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program when a state court orders the provision of health insurance coverage for a child of the employee, but the employee fails to provide coverage.

## President Bush Slams the Door on the Bipartisan Patients’ Bill of Rights

As Republicans and Democrats prepared to unveil their bipartisan, compromise Patients’ Bill of Rights, President Bush—in a manner which was in stark contrast to his attempts to reach out to members of both parties—pulled key Republicans into the White House in an attempt to stop them from sponsoring this compromise bill.

The Bipartisan Patient Protection Act, of which Congressman Cummings is a co-sponsor, was introduced on February 5, 2001, by a bipartisan coalition.

While President Bush’s input on this important issue is welcomed, his attempts to break up the bipartisan coalition are certainly not.

Then, on February 6, 2001, President Bush released a set of “principles” that are at odds with the principles guiding the bipartisan consensus-builder in Congress.

The Bipartisan Patient Protection Act demonstrates once again that there is a bipartisan group determined to deliver a Patients’ Bill of Rights to the American people, a bill that will finally provide all insured patients with:

- continuity-of-care protections so that patients will not have an abrupt transition in care if their providers are dropped;
  - access to a fair, unbiased and timely internal appeals process and an independent, external appeals process to address health plan grievances;
  - assurance that doctors and patients can openly discuss treatment options and make medical decisions based on the doctor’s judgment of the patient’s needs; and
  - an enforcement mechanism that gives genuine recourse to patients who have been harmed as a result of a health plan’s actions.
- The lack of patient protections in HMOs is not a partisan issue—this is a crucial problem that affects the lives of millions of Americans.
- President Bush should not hold up this critical issue. For years, special interests have stalled passage of a strong Patients’ Bill of Rights. A crucial opportunity stands before us today—an opportunity to finally break the grip of the Big Insurance and Big Business lobbies and stop denying the American people the important patient protections they deserve.
- guaranteed access to needed health care specialists;
  - access to emergency room services when and where they are needed;

# “The Christmas Tree Effect”

As the debate over tax cuts heats up, here are a few things to keep in mind:

1) Democrats believe in a budget that cuts taxes for all Americans, leaves enough room to pay off the debt, and invests in Social Security, Medicare, education, and defense.

2) President Bush's plan is not a \$1.6 trillion tax cut, but a massive \$2.6 trillion package only likely to grow once corporate lobbyists swing into action. A February 2, 2001, Associated Press story reads: “Congressional Republicans and lobbyists say they like President Bush's proposed tax cut, but they won't back down from plans to add their own priorities.”

*The Wall Street Journal* echoed: “Already, the early stirrings of a special-interest feeding frenzy can be heard in Washington.”

Leaders Dick Armey and Trent Lott, according to *Congress Daily*, said the tax cut “would likely grow larger than the \$1.6 trillion original outline as it moves through Congress.”

Does anyone truly believe that Republicans, after reaping the benefits of corporate cash during their campaigns, will resist the

entreaties of high-paid lobbyist allies? Look for this plan to grow to \$3 trillion once lobbyists have their day.

3) The Bush plan is unfair to working families. Forty-three percent of the tax cut goes to the wealthiest 1% of the population. “No matter how the data is sliced in the upcoming debate in Congress and the country,” argued one reporter in the February 6, 2001, *Washington Post*, “most of the tax cut dollars go to wealthier Americans who in fact pay the majority of income taxes.”

4) The impact of the rate reduction will be so small in 2001 that it will not stimulate the economy.

5) As Alan Greenspan and the CBO pointed out in recent weeks, surplus projections are just that, projections, not fact.

We should recognize that our resources are not infinite, and that the lion's share of tax relief should go to middle- and working-class families who need the help most.

6) The Bush plan is so large it jeopardizes Social Security and Medicare and could return us to massive deficits, which is what the 1981 Reagan tax cut did.

## Managing the surplus

The Congressional Budget Office has released the new surplus projections that will likely spark a new round in the debate over fiscal policy.

Surplus projections are just that, projections, not fact. No one can accurately, with 100% certainty, forecast how big the surplus will be in the future.

Democrats believe we must manage the surplus in a way that invests in all Americans. Since 1993, we have stayed on the path of fiscal discipline, reversed years of runaway deficits, and built a surplus for the first time in a generation. Now, we have an opportunity to eliminate the debt, save Social Security and Medicare, and provide a Medicare prescription medicine benefit to all seniors, while providing a sensible measure of tax relief to the American taxpayer.

But only if we make the right choices today.

Democrats want tax cuts for all Americans. We have a surplus, and we can afford to give some of this money back to hard-working taxpayers.

But there's a right way to cut taxes, and there's a wrong way. The right way includes tax cuts for the middle-income and those trying to get into the middle-income, and a budget that leaves enough room to pay off the debt, improve public education, and invest in the other needs and priorities of the American people.

President Bush has proposed a \$1.9 trillion tax cut that gives the lion's share of relief to the wealthy. The Democrats, along with most economists believe that his plan leaves no room in the budget for debt reduction, defense needs, Social Security, Medicare, or education. The President's plan would spend a large share of the entire available surplus on a tax cut alone. It threatens our prosperity and could return us to the big budget deficits of the 1980s.

Democrats want to work with our new President, and we hope he will lean forward, move to the middle, and join us in a budget that maintains fiscal responsibility and economic prosperity for all Americans.

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